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Thousands Give 'Bear' Final Salute

By JOHN PRUETT, Times Sports Editor

BIRMINGHAM — Out on I-59, the motorcade stretched for three miles — as far as the eye could see and beyond.

It started late Friday morning from the front of the First United Methodist Church in downtown Tuscaloosa, where thousands had gathered for the funeral of the Bear from Alabama, Paul W. Bryant.

Bryant, the winningest coach in the history of college football and the most revered citizen of the state, died Wednesday of a massive heart attack just six weeks after announcing his retirement and only four weeks after his last University of Alabama football team defeated Illinois in the Liberty Bowl.

Following a 20-minute service conducted by the Rev. Joe Elmore, the motorcade — led by an honor guard of state troopers — began its 60-mile trip to Birmingham and to the family plot at Elmwood Cemetery.

The white hearse carrying Bryant's body followed a sentimental route out of Tuscaloosa.

It passed Bryant-Denny Stadium, where Bryant's teams won 72 games and lost only two in his 25 years as Alabama's head coach.

It passed Bryant's office at Memorial Coliseum, where the Stars and Stripes waved at half-staff on the towering flagpole.

It passed Druid City Hospital, where Bryant was taken after complaining of chest pains Tuesday night, and where he died with such shocking suddenness at mid-day Wednesday.

It slowly moved down McFarland Boulevard, where thousands of mourners lined the streets in silent tribute.

Finally it turned left and onto the interstate, heading east for Birmingham. When the hearse reached I-59, the last of the funeral procession was just turning onto McFarland.

On the way to Birmingham, crowds gathered in bunches at intermittent locations — along roadside fences, on rolling hillsides, at roadside parks, at truck stops.

On the opposite side of the road, the traffic pulled over to the side and stopped, and sometimes the occupants of the cars and trucks and the 18-wheelers walked over to stand in the grassy median, hats in hand.

Dozens of mourners lined every one of the frequent overpasses between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, and many of them had painted signs in crimson letters:

"Brookwood Loves You, Bear."

"Farewell, Bear. We'll Miss You."

"Coach Bryant, You Will Live in Our Hearts Forever."

"We Love You, Coach."

"Coach, Thanks for the Memories."

At one unfinished overpass near Bessemer, con-

struction workers in hard-hats had scrawled a message in green paint on a plywood rectangle: "Bear, We Love You and We'll Miss You."

Near the Fairfield exit, a teen-ager held high his own hand-written sign: "God Needed an Offensive Coordinator."

As the motorcade approached Birmingham, the crowds along the interstate grew larger. Some women stood along the roadside, holding babies in their arms. Men of all ages took caps off their heads and held them over their hearts.

Hundreds along the roadside wore their Alabama colors — red windbreakers, Crimson Tide hats, Bama jerseys.

But this was an event that also transcended allegiances: Many of the cars alongside the road had Auburn stickers on their rear windows, and many of the silent mourners wore Auburn jackets.

Turn to Page B-3

Coming
Sunday



Extra

Phobia Victim
Escapes From
Private Prison



Federal Budget

Reagan Asks For Freeze, Defense Hike

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan is asking Congress to freeze domestic spending in his 1984 budget while granting defense a \$30 billion increase, a combination congressional leaders say will be next to impossible to approve.

Administration budget papers distributed on Capitol Hill on Friday show an \$848.5 billion spending plan for the 1984 fiscal year and a deficit of \$189 billion. The administration predicts a slow, steady recovery from the recession be-

than Reagan wants.

In addition, there are widespread predictions that Congress will approve some type of public service or public works jobs program, despite Reagan's objections.

The budget summaries, distributed widely in Congress, disclose the deficit for the current fiscal year will be \$208 billion, a record. Red-ink spending for 1984 is predicted to fall slightly, to \$189 billion, and rise again to \$194